



(Aaron Cheever delivers the goods for a second straight issue)

YOSHIHIRO TAKAYAMA! is great! Stupid Timeperiod Injury! SUPER DEMEKIN! is great! Stupid Timeperiod Injury! KUNG FU! vs. NINJITSU! CHI-NEN HOKKAI! LOU THESZ! SUWA! HARLEY RACE! Let's see if we remember how to do this....

WELCOME TO THE DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #139

It's been awhile. They have been a bunch of developments which none of you care about so we will move on. We all got burnt out on writing about the professional wrestling so this issue sat and sat. And my dreams of making this a lost issue grew and grew as more and more people asked. But Dean wanted his rock opera to see the light of day so here we are. First up, a new little idea for us - a roundtable discussion. This helped all of us to get our thinking straightened out and to remind ourselves that we really don't like each other and that we really love to insults fly while watching the professional wrestling.

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YOSHIHIRO TAKAYAMA vs. MASA CHONO, TAKAYAMA vs. OSAMU NISHIMURA, TAKAYAMA vs. KAZUYUKI FUJITA, TAKAYAMA vs. MITSUHARA MISAWA, TAKAYAMA vs. DON FRYE, TAKAYAMA vs. YUJI NAGATA, TAKAYAMA vs. YUTAKA YOSHIE - a Round Table Discussion

(by DEAN RASMUSSEN, TOM KARRO-GASSNER, PHIL SCHNEIDER, PHIL RIPPA)

DR: Dean Rasmussen

PR: Phil Rippa

TKG: Tom Karro-Gassner

PS: Phil Schneider

DR: I'm assuming that Takayama went from suck-ass half-assed shootstylist to Lord God king of Puroresu while having a thousand matches as part of team No Fear. I know he was getting real good at old school tags and I think his grasp of fundamental psychology coincided with his rise as a legit shoot fighter. All this kinda coalesced into the astoundingly fun wrestler that is currently producing the best wrestling matches in the world. I've thrown out the higher profile matches of the last year and between the Phils (Schneider and Rippa) Tom K and myself- we've seen all of them (Tom K and Phil have actually seen ALL of them. Phil hasn't sent me the Nagata match and I opted against watching the Misawa for DVDVR 500 time constraint reasons and then I loaned the tape out and you know the drill) and I do know that none of share the same feeling on the best of the lot and I figured y'all- the gentle readers- would want the full spectrum of thought on the impressive body of work Takayama has produced this year so I have made this a Roundtable Discussion. I'm sure my fellow esteemed and dusted playaz will throw other matches from the Takayama big run to further expound on his strangely great string of matches. Schneider thought that the Nishimura match was the best because it was a full-blown Nishimura Dory Funk Old School match and Takayama was hanging with Nishimura doing non-shootstyle matwork and selling all 1974 to make the match a true Nishimura match. See, that's the key to Takayama now, he knows the strength of his opponent and builds the match around it. That's why the Nishimura match isn't my favorite. My favorite is the motherfucking balls out Chono match- because the strength of Chono right now is that he is a the crippled version of Jerry Lawler in Memphis- the ass-kicker who is 95% punches and psychology at this point. The thing that Takayama brings to the table in this match is that Chono can just tee off and move the match along by punching to transition and it looks legit because it is legit punches that are working Chono back to his basic leg attack. Tom was the one that pointed out the masterful selling of the leg by to take it all way to greatness. I was too dazzled by Chono actually looking like he was ready to deliver in a big match and this was one of the best G-1 Climax matches I've ever seen. I would say that Chono fired up had a lot to do with the match being so good, but it was also Takayama leaning into the kicks and punches like a fucking MAN and his selling of said ass-beating. I think both were really good matches and both were a pretty big pinnacle of Old School Pro Style and Southern Ass-Stomping- but I prefer Southern Ass-Stomping over about anything else in wrestling and Chono vs. Takayama was fucking about great as that style of match can get.

PR: I will let Phil and Tom do most of the heavy lifting for the Chono/Takayama match but I will say that I have pretty much always been an unabashed Chono mark so I was probably the most up for this match. He also had a bunch of enjoyable matches through the entire G1 climax that had no right to be as enjoyable as they were. I also will take Yakuza kicks and the STF over the fistdrop, strap drop and piledriver combo any day. Fuck, I know this is supposed to be a big celebration of Takayama but I want to give Chono some credit too as he took the king sized of king sized beatings in the match. Don't believe me? Go watch the flurry of knees in the corner again. Also, I took perverse enjoyment in the shots of an annoyed Inoki as these two beat the hell out of each other and the fired up crowd being all about the match.

DR: I was oversold on the Fujita fight from the Crossroads tape- as it really pales in comparison to the other matches on that card, but it was still a perfectly fine UWF-i heavyweight match- with both of these guys not afraid to let the other beat the life out of the other. Fujita is really limited in Pro Style and it didn't have near the fury of the fun fun fun Frye vs. Takayama shootfight from Pride. That's the problem you run into with this Inokiization of New Japan- the shootstyle worked matches always run the risk of getting smoked by non-worked matches.

TKG: I actually haven't seen the Takayama vs. Frye shoot match. So send that my way already.

PAS: Let me chime in as well with praise for Chono vs. Takayama. This is probably the best Chono singles match I have ever seen, which is amazing considering how busted up Chono is physically. The great thing bout Takayama is that he seems to really be able to figure out his opponent's strengths and work a match based around those strengths. Nakanishi can take a beating but has some shitty offense, so we will stiff each other and I will counter all of his offense in really great ways; Sasaki and Fujita are limited brawlers, lets work some really great brawls. Misawa and Chono have signature spots and are crazy over, I will base a match around those big spots, sell huge for them and work like a monster. After watching the Misawa and Chono match, I get the sense that Takayama could have a really great match with Austin or Helmsley or even Undertaker. My favorite Takayama match was a real shining example of that versatility.

TKG: I really did like the Chono match. Liked it a lot. I still think Dean is oversold on Chono in that. When Dean called with G1 Day 2, he asked me whether I thought he should watch Tenzan vs. Chono and I emphatically said YES. So Dean watched the match, cursing at me over the phone. It's a really really mediocre match and exposes the limitations of both guys. Chono's had a recent string of long good impressive matches (the Broadway tags and the singles with Nagata). In these matches like the Tenzan match, you believe that Chono can win because... well, you know wrestling is worked and he's over and whatnot. The matches are neat theoretical exercises...lets see how long Chono and Nagata can work this. But at no point do you really believe that Chono is a guy who can LEGIT beat his opponent; Nagata and Tenzan seem to be working half speed to work him and its fun and all to pop for Chono psyche but you don't buy it. Takayama makes you believe that Chono's threat is real and it never looks like Takayama is pulling anything or slowing down for Chono. The rep on Takayama is that he's a never say die punching bag- and that might be true for his shoot work- but in actual pro style match he's so much more than a punching bag. It's all about his selling and his offense. Sasaki and Tenzan both work much looser than Takayama but he makes all their offense seem super deadly by the way he sells. He makes you believe that Chono can beat him, that Chono is a legit threat. Takayama makes you believe in his opponents. Takayama sells for Chono's STF like nobody's business- he fights and fights and struggles to escape it and he makes you believe that the STF is legit that it can legit weaken a man. The STF saps Takayama's strength, leaving him vulnerable to the Yakuza kicks. And watching it you BELIEVE in the STF and you believe in Chono. The Chono match is a spectacular match with the whole top NJ guy vs. outsider atmosphere. For a AJ trained guy vs. a really over but crippled NJ star, it smokes every Kawada vs. Muto match.

All that said, it's not my favorite Takayama match from this year. My favorite match was the Takayama vs. Nakanishi (6/7/02). A good portion of the match is filled with the two big guys chopping the fuck out of each other's chests. That will always make the Ronnie Garvin mark in me smile. Nakanishi chops Takayama red, while Takayama just kicks the holy hell out of Nakanishi. However, the match isn't built around these exchanges. The match is built around Takayama trying to find counters and escapes from Nakanishi's offense. Nakanishi is a big Hoss who can chop hard and has some nice suplexes. He also has some really shitty offense. He has a less than mediocre spear (think valet spear at your local indy), a claw and a torture rack. I happen to like Argentine backbreaker and think if the opponents draped properly it can look nasty. That said, Nakanishi's backbreaker is Lugerish- with the opponent laying straight like he's about to be airplane spun. It becomes less an offensive move and more a neat Festuvus stunt. Again, Takayama makes you believe in his opponents. Takayama fights for and out of German suplexes. It's amusing to see a single German be so meaningful when there must be thirty meaningless Germans in every Smackdown tag. Nakanishi goes for a spear and Takayama counters it with a knee to the face and the crowd oos. The counters makes the move meaningful, I believe in the threat of the spear because of Takayama's escape- if only he hits the spear, he can get him. When Nakanishi goes for the claw, Takayama counters it into a cross-armbreaker, Takayama counters the torture rack into a front choke bulldog and suddenly I look at all of Nakanishi's offense in a new light. Takayama's counters and selling make Nakanishi look great. The match essentially ends when Nakanishi makes another attempt at the spear. The crowd understands that the spear is a make or miss move here. Has Takayama been weakened enough that he won't be able to counter it? And Takayama sapped of some of his strength is just barely able to counter it again. Nakanishi doesn't come out of this looking weak at all. He may actually come out looking stronger than he did coming in. I walk away with the story telegraphed, if only he had weakened Takayama enough to hit that spear... It's just a really deep, beautiful match.

PR: For the longest time Takayama/Nakanishi was my favorite match of the moment. Then the last minute crush of 500 tapes came in and I watched Takayama/Yoshie. Yes, you read that right – Yoshie. I feel like Dean in 1995. Lumpy Heayweights Baby!!! I might as well just start talking about how great Tommy Dreamer and Jeff Jarrett are going to be. If it starts to burn when I pee, then the transformation will be complete. This is nowhere near as good of a “wrestling” match as any of the other Takayama matches we have mentioned but damn if it isn't the greatest example of a Takayama carry job. You will sit there and revel in the greatest Billy Mayes con job wondering when the fuck Yoshie became the greatest wrestler that you don't have enough footage off. Takayama calls the entire match, which is basically a lot of him motioning to Yoshie to hit him as hard as he can. Takayama also sells his ass off, fighting out of the half-ass Yoshie Boston Crab and basically powerbombing himself. I also applaud Yoshie's – the lovable lump – attempts at some selling. Of course, Takayama brings the pain and Yoshie doesn't puss out and eats it all. This match is way too much fun to not watch repeatedly.

PS: When I got Takayama vs. Nishimura in the G1 Climax finals, I hadn't seen the Chono and Misawa matches yet and was only really exposed to Takayama the brawler. Nishimura was a

super fun worker, but his matches were based around 70's style mat work and seemed way too small to have a credible brawl with Takayama. So Takayama- who I have seen derided as a one dimensional punching bag- decides he better work a Nishimura match, and then goes ahead and does it better than anyone else I have seen. The first fifteen minutes of the match are without a single strike, as the story of the match is that Takayama attempting to beat Osamu at his game- he is an outsider who is going to come in and take the mat wrestler to the mat. Unlike Nagata who is usually trying to work shootstyle matwork with Nishimura, Takayama- who is a UWFI trained worker and an actual shooter- works the match like it is 1972.

The whole opening section is based around headscissors and hammerlocks and knucklelocks, not cross armbreakers or kneebars. After the long initial mat section Takayama does a deadlift out of a Nishimura keylock (the Solar vs. Blue Panther or Shawn Michaels v. Bulldog spot) and blasts Nishimura with some kicks in the corner. Takayama can't handle Nishimura on the mat so he is just going to beat his ass. The match is then all about Nishimura using his speed to counter Takayama strength - as it is clear that if Takayama can hit him, he is done, so he has to move quick, and he counters a running kick into some leg work and a long figure four section (which Takayama sells like a king). He also counters a German suplex into a octopus and running knee into a cradle. The crowd totally bought all of these near fall attempts, which is a testament to both guys. However, Takayama is just too big and strong and he is able to catch Nishimura with a big kick and a great German suplex for the win. Perfectly done underdog vs. monster match, as good as any similar style match Vader ever worked.

PR: Schneider and I talked for a while about how excited yet leery we were of a Takayama/Nishimura match. Because it is two wrestlers who we love and are really great. And as opposed to Dean Malenko and Steve Regal who inexplicably had bad matches against each other, their styles at least meshed in theory. Here you are looking at a potential train wreck. That is part of the reason why the G1 Climax match is so great to watch.

The whole first section of the match is the greatest Joe Malenko vs. the world's tallest, ugliest, best Davey Boy Smith. Of course, Takayama's selling is 400 hundred times better than DBS's . He works out of the headscissors by doing little things like sliding his hands in between Nishimura's thighs to allow that small bit of space in so he can do the simplest of tasks – breathe. I also am reminded of how I need to go on a discourse about how I think Nishimura has the greatest bridge in wrestling history but this is not the time nor place. The knuckle lock and bridge discourse can be held for later. Actually – what is really great about the matwork is that even conforms to the power vs. style psychology of the match as Nishimura's holds and counters are more technical, more wily if you will. Lots of gobehinds. Lots of counters into leglocks or surfboards. Anything where the proper application of the hold is more important to effectiveness of the hold than the power applied to it. Takayama meanwhile sticks with the pure pressure holds – like a simple headlock where he can just use his superior power to choke Nishimura out. Which is a lot more plausible than the other way around.

I really enjoy the moment where Takayama changes his strategy in the match. You can see the epiphany. The moment where the thought “Fuck, I can just beat this guy into submission”

comes. Like Phil mentions, Nishimura is all about being with the change in the match as he immediately becomes Gordon Solie's favorite wrestling by picking a body part (the leg) and sticking with it. I actually would have preferred if Takayama had stuck with the pure strikes during the closing portions of the match as I thought he application of his submission diminished as the long match went on. This is more a personal preference than anything I guess. And Takayama on the stick sounds like Kathleen Turner on the stick after two vodka tonics and a pack of Marlboros.

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UFC 2 – The Missing Matches

(by MIKE NAIMARK)

In the long and storied American history of MMA, few events have held my imagination as firmly as the second edition of the Ultimate Fighting Championship. At this point in the evolution of the sport, the difference between the legitimate fighter and the kata-practicing, board-breaking dojo queen was largely non-existent, meaning that we could still look forward to seeing masters of Kung Fu, Tae Kwon Do, Karate, and other 'traditional' forms of self-defense that have been largely discarded by the winnowing process of modern MMA. Only in these early events can you see a ninja square off against the pebble-snatching Kung Fu guru, or a judoka plying his trade on the ground against the clueless kickboxer. And somewhere behind it all, Royce Gracie snickered, unseen.

As memorable as UFC2 was, the PPV and commercial video did American fans a slight disservice; the show was a 16-man tournament, where the winner would have to win 4 times in one night. To accommodate the restrictions of PPV, the first round of the tournament was never shown, with the exception of Royce Gracie's first round win over an overmatched Japanese karateka. Thus, American fans never learned who that lanky fellow was breaking boards in the UFC2 pre-show video, or what skills the creeping, crawling, gesturing, Maxwell Klinger-esque fellow in the flowing black robes brought to the UFC. No, fair reader, hidden from view since Bill Clinton was just a suspected pervert are the matches that the UFC didn't want you to see!

Thankfully, an unknown ninja managed to evade attack dogs, night watchmen, and the most sensitive of electronic surveillance at the UFC's remote island headquarters, and return, tape in hand, to present this gift to the world. Take a moment to review your memories of UFC2, and perhaps review their "Everything You Need To Know" segment at the beginning of the PPV, which teaches us poor rubes the wisdom of the ancients, where karate practitioners could still claim to practice, "One Strike, One Kill" without being laughed out of their strip mall dojos. Presented for your enjoyment, dear reader, the fights the UFC didn't want you to see! UFC2 – the Missing Matches!

1st Match – Sean Daugherty (TKD) vs Scott Morris (Ninjitsu)

Daugherty shows his ass-kicking abilities early by conducting his pre-fight interview while performing a full split between two folding chairs. I'm telling ya, if this fight breaks down into an autofellatio contest, I'm betting the farm on Daugherty. Commentator Jim Brown states that he was unable to locate Scott Morris for a pre-fight interview, but notes that since Morris is a ninja,

and “being elusive is part of Ninjitsu”, we shouldn’t be surprised. What wouldn’t be surprising is if Morris and his Ninjitsu teammates attacked Daugherty in the locker room and were beaten back one at a time, as is the ninja custom.

Daugherty leaps forward with a couple of flicking leg kicks before being tied up by Ninja Scott. The Ninja grabs a front headlock and, astoundingly enough, performs a fairly textbook money-flip on the befuddled TKD wizard, sending him ass-over-head to the ground and hanging on to his front headlock for an easy chokeout from the mounted position. In less than 30 seconds, the Ninja defeated the Tae-Kwon-Do master! Clearly TKD is a sham, and Ninjitsu is the real deal!

2nd Match – Pat Smith (kickboxing) vs. Ray Wizard (karate)

Why don’t fighters have names like ‘Ray Wizard’ any more? Wizard represents karate and hails from South Central LA, where he was undoubtedly the local LA version of Bruce Leroy questing for that elusive “Glow” that separates the true martial-arts masters from the wanna-be Shoguns. Sho ‘nuff! Pat Smith is returning from his painful defeat to Ken Shamrock in UFC1, where Smith was introduced to a new kind of pain compliments of some fancy-pants sissy-hold called a “heel hook”. Smith catches the first kick Wizard throws and quickly clinches against the Octagon fence. As Wizard drives forward, Smith locks in a guillotine choke and cranks like crazy as Wizard tries his best to block an attack that he’d never seen before, despite the fact that he’d watched every Bruce Lee movie at least TEN TIMES! That Smith has a lot of nerve using a non-Bruce approved hold, but before Wizard can file his official protest, he loses consciousness and collapses onto the mat. I believe the camera cuts away from the Octagon shortly before Smith hovers over the prone Wizard, proclaiming, “Now *I* am the Master!” as electricity crackles around him.

3rd Match – Dave Levicki (Wing-Chung Kung Fu) vs Johnny Rhodes (kickboxing)

You want Kung-Fu? You got Kung-Fu! Not only is Dave Levivki a master of this mysterious art of the Orient, but our announcers mention that he is a former Navy Seal. At 6’5 275lb, Levicki is bigger than any two Shaolin monks; what chance can the dour-looking 6’ 200lb Rhodes have against this mighty embodiment of Mortal Combat mayhem? Rhodes opens with a spinning back kick that bounces harmlessly off Levicki’s bulk and the two men grapple clumsily until they topple to the ground in a writhing heap, with Rhodes eventually finding himself on top. A few headbutts from Rhodes, some countering palm strikes and knuckle-thrusts from Levicki, and the action slows to a crawl. Suddenly, Levicki reveals a brilliant and unanticipated strategy from his back – wrapping his legs around Rhodes’ waist, Levicki manages to tactfully pull Rhodes’ karate pants down, exposing Johnny’s “two buns of fun” for all the world to see. Not content to let this comedic spectacle continue unhindered, our unfortunate referee John McCarthy reaches into Rhodes’ pants and pulls them back to waist level, only to see the depantsing repeated just seconds later. When McCarthy tries to hoist Rhodes’ pants up a second time, he mistakenly grabs a bit more than he anticipates; with both hands, he grabs a hold of what appears to be Johnny Rhodes’ jockstrap and pulls until the elastic has stretched nearly a foot before realizing his error and letting go, allowing the elastic band to ‘thwack’ solidly into Rhodes’ back. For perhaps the first 10+ minutes, our glimpses of Mr. Rhodes’ ‘Johnnycakes’ and John McCarthy’s

homoerotic attempts to horn in on the action are the highlights of this otherwise uninteresting lay-n-pray snoozer, as neither man understands the fundamentals of grappling well enough to assert themselves from the ground. A trickle of blood is visible from the outer corner of Levicki's left eye around the 10-minute mark, as the bigger Kung Fu master seems unable to execute any appropriate Kung Fu wizardry to escape his situation. Finally, Rhodes lands a hefty forearm smash to the face, followed by a pair of crushing headbutts which convinces Levicki to tap out. As Levicki stands, we can see that the last flurry of blows from Johnny Rhodes has turned the trickle of blood from his eye into an oozing gusher, as Levicki's face is quickly coated in the thick red stuff. Levicki's listless loss reflects not only the general worthlessness of Kung Fu in the UFC, but also serves of a harbinger of the future, as this former military Special Forces member takes a beating without the reassurance of a weapon in his hands. We would have to wait several years for Greg 'Ranger' Stott to enter the Octagon and attempt to redeem the honor of the military with his expeditious fighting system, RIP.

4th Match – Freek Hamaker (Sambo) vs. Thaddeus Luster (San-Su Kung Fu)

Another Kung Fu master enters the Octagon, this time in the form of the strangely tranquil Thaddeus Luster, who proclaims himself a 7th degree black belt in his art. Remember when hearing of such credentials was enough to make a mere mortal gasp in awe? Luster actually looks like he is attempting to become the real-life doppelganger for "Bruce Leroy" from the martial-arts classic, "The Last Dragon", as he wears the stereotypical black Kung Fu Master outfit and appears so serene and focused that I wouldn't doubt for a second that he could catch a fly with his tongue, to say nothing of a pair of chopsticks. Across the Octagon from Luster stands a stocky Dutchman in a red gi top who represents the Russian style of Sambo. I have been informed by Rick James himself that Mr. Hamaker has **never** achieved the rank of 'Superfreek', so anybody who tells you otherwise is lying to your face and deserves your scorn. The two men grapple immediately and Luster actually gets a takedown on Hamaker using the traditional Kung Fu technique of a hair pull combined with a leg trip. Hamaker quickly reverses the position on the ground and achieves the full mount. Working for an armlock from the mount, Hamaker becomes unbalanced and Luster quickly regains his feet to the cheers of the crowd. The cheering only intensifies when Hamaker takes Luster back to the mat with a picturesque throw over his hip, this time landing in the side-mount position. Freek quickly assumes the full mount and throws some sissified hammer-fist blows and goes briefly to a keylock before throwing more limp punches. Hamaker returns to the keylock after his barrage and finally does score the tapout in an unremarkable fight that offered only more bad news for the editors of "Kung Fu Magazine".

5th Match – Orlando Weit (Muay-Thai) vs. Robert Lucarelli (kickboxing)

A contrast between these two strikers is immediately apparent, as Weit's physique looks to have been carved from the finest onyx, while the pasty Lucarelli looks to have been sculpted from cottage cheese based on genetic blueprints originally used for the Pillsbury Doughboy. Weit immediately lands a good left jab and deftly avoids several kick attempts from the pudgy Lucarelli before being taken to the ground with a clumsy tackle. Weit and Lucarelli both struggle to their feet, where our tubby hero latches on a awkward schoolboy choke and tumbles to the mat. Weit flops around for a bit before slipping his arm under the choke and extracting his head.

He quickly fires a barrage of elbows to the back of Lucarelli's head, stands up, and delivers a brutal soccer kick to his unfortunate opponent's undefended melon. As Lucarelli collapses into the mat and twitches slightly, Orlando Weit turns his back to him and walks across the Octagon, hands upraised, declaring victory. One problem – in these early UFCs, a fighter has to tap-out, or have his corner throw in the towel. Lucarelli has had the benefit of neither, and so Weit is ordered back into the slaughterhouse by our referee. Lucky Lucarelli indeed. Orlando charges in with a crushing right hand as the dazed and helpless Lucarelli flails back with a clear look of fear and hopelessness in his face – he wants to quit, but can't remember how! Lucarelli rolls away from Weit's assault, only to catch another kick to the side of the head. Collapsing on the mat, he is an easy target for several crushing elbowstrikes to the head until it suddenly dawns on the referee that this fellow screaming like a schoolgirl is trying to signal his desire to please, please make the pain stop. Weit is finally pulled off and declared the victor.

6th Match – Alberto Cerro Leon (Pentak Silat) vs. Remco Pardoel (Judo)

Ahh, Pentak Silat, one of the mysterious arts of the far east! You may remember Mr. Leon from the introduction to the UFC2 commercial tape, where he is shown in his flowing garments making weird finger gestures and crawling on the ground like a spastic cat. His opponent is a rather large, babyfaced Dutchman competing in his judo gi. Using some laughably bizarre hand and finger movements to assert his status as a true martial-arts master worthy of a spot in the Bloodsport Kumite, Leon catches Pardoel with a good stiff right hand and quickly maneuvers behind the bigger Judoka. Pardoel calmly grabs hold of Leon's wrist and tosses him deftly over his shoulder in a beautiful display of classical judo technique. Once on the ground, Pardoel struggles mightily to control the clueless but energetic Silat man before settling in to a sloppy side mount. Pardoel fiddles around for a minute or so, not appearing to make any progress when Leon suddenly taps out. A closer inspection shows that Remco had a weak-looking side choke which subdued his foe. Despite having the most ridiculous-looking pre-fight video, our Silat representative made a solid showing for himself, although this was undoubtedly based more on his own natural endurance and athleticism than on anything his craptastic Silat mastery brought to the table.

7th Match – Scott Baker (Kung Fu) vs. Jason DeLucia (Kung Fu)

An interesting back story here, as DeLucia surreptitiously trained in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu with the Gracies prior to entering the UFC, despite his Kung Fu credentials. The Gracie camp was none too pleased to find out that DeLucia then entered the UFC, where Royce was competing, but more on that later. The match goes to the ground almost immediately, with DeLucia winding up in Baker's tightly closed guard. DeLucia kills some time until Baker opens his guard, then quickly grabs an ankle, falls back, and starts cranking. To his credit, Kung Fool Baker handles the attempted heel hook better than could be expected, actually rolling in the direction of the cranking to alleviate the pressure (purely by luck, it appears). When DeLucia loosens his grips momentarily to grab a better hold, Baker slips from his grasp and regains his feet. The crowd erupts in cheers, hoping to see some fireball hurling or cross-Octagon bicycle kicking, but we all know better now, don't we? DeLucia lands a flinging lead right hand and tries to shoot in behind it, only to be thwarted by a Baker sprawl. Baker now finds himself in DeLucia's guard and actually slaps DeLucia's face before being caught in a triangle choke. Holding on to Baker's gi

sleeve for dear life, DeLucia cranks his triangle choke with all his might, yet once again the seemingly clueless Baker manages to weasel out of the predicament despite appearing totally befuddled by his position. DeLucia springs up as Baker pulls his head out, and regains the mounted position. Baker reverses into DeLucia's guard and immediately finds himself on the wrong end of the triangle choke for a second time. Still utterly ignorant of his options, Baker actually rolls over so that DeLucia maintains the triangle while sitting on Baker's head. One or two punches to the noggin are all it takes for DeLucia to earn the tapout in his hard-fought match.

And so, with Royce Gracie's win over Ichihara in his own first-round match (which can be viewed on the commercial videotape), our second round matchups were made. Freek Hammaker withdrew with a case of the chickens after seeing what Johnny Rhodes did in his first-round matchup, to be replaced by the now-legendary Fred Ettish, while Ninja Scott Morris made a bit of history himself against Pat Smith. Jason DeLucia learned the hard way how the Gracie's treat disrespectful students and nearly had his arm rudely removed from his screaming body, and when everything was said and done, Royce Gracie stood victorious over the field yet again, beating 4 consecutive victims to continue his undefeated streak and cement his place as the first legend of American MMA. With the age of Ninjas and Kung Fu masters firmly relegated to the past, these early UFCs remain an amusingly anachronistic time capsule of our Bloodsport-deluded views of the realities of fighting. Just a few short years later, nobody would be asking if Jean Claude Van Damm or Steven Segal could beat Mike Tyson in a fight, because a scrawny, 170lb Brazilian had rendered the entire discussion moot by showing the world something almost as impressive as the crackling fireball and the stealthy ceiling crawl – the truth.

So tune in next time fight fans, as we continue to probe the fleshy buttocks of MMA with the brutal boot of critical analysis. Ninjas and Kung Fu masters come and go, but one thing that never changes is our unyielding desire to bring you the best of the world of full contact fighting here in YOUR Death Valley Driver.

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WRESTLE-1 (11/17/2002)
(by ANTHONY GANCARSKI)

Abdullah The Butcher vs. SATA (Masaaki Satake)

I have seen worse Abby matches, actually. Watched this with non-wrestling fans in the room, who made the same remarks about Abby's rack you probably made the first time you saw him. Yeah, the time he mounted your sister, slathering an exquisite mustard-based BBQ sauce on her lithe, ravaged form. Mmmm...mustard.

Kendo Ka Shin/THE APEMAN NIGO (Kaoru Uno) vs. La Parka/Super Parka

A lot of comedy here, a few nice spots, a lot of comedy that isn't actually funny. A very 90s American style tag in parts, reminding me of a match that may have made What Worked on a

WCWSN report. Or maybe it wouldn't have made it. Las Parkas do some stuff spoofing Too Much's old hip-hop dance routine. It may have taken a bit too long though, as by the time it was over my nose hair had dreaded up. The first two matches would've been a more interesting six-man; teaming Abby and Las Parkas would've made for a better dance number.

Sam Grecaras (Sam Greco)/Dos Caras Jr. vs. Taiyo Kea/Kaz Hayashi

This match suffered from an essential disconnect at its core. It was as unbalanced as the pairings suggested, and the first few minutes frustrated with weak heelish offense from Kea and Hayashi. So weak that I'd swear Abby was working stiffer in the opener. The match picked up when Caras was in, and I soon realized that a decision had been made to work around the faltering Greco, who seemed to blow most everything more complex than a front kick.

Satoshi Kojima/Hiroshi Hase vs. Mark Coleman/Kevin Randleman

Started off with Coleman working the kinks out of Hase's back via some half-speed matwork. I nodded off, and woke up in a dream world. Hase was Verne Gagne; built like Mr Potato Head but with the uncanny ability to no-sell Kevin Randleman [who could be the next Butch Reed if WWE had the inclination.] This match should've been one big heat segment on Old Man Hase, Johnny Weaver with a better Giant Swing and a worse pelvic thrust. It should've ended with the Americans standing over the battered, broken form of the John Waters of puroresu [Japanese wrestling, the style of which I am a fan]. The Japanese people should've understood that Hase was down, never to return. Sorta like how WCW showed southern fans that it was hopeless to believe in anything by pissing on Flair from Jim Herd onward. Old-style Flair fans may be the only people in America to understand that shit started hitting the fan long, long ago. Back when you started to realize everyone around you would end up in lockdown or under surveillance. Anyway, WCW understood the art imitates life and that folks had better come to realize that this is no longer the American Century, so they were willing to sacrifice their own company by jobbing its icon out to any carpetbagging trash that put on wrestling boots, whose image was once impaled on VKM's popsicle stick. WCW jobbed Flair out because they loved us enough to tell us the truth. We all get jobbed out in the end, and Hase should've been beaten like a dog in this match, and he wasn't. I hope O'Reilly turns it into a dip-lo-mat-tic inseedent.

Shinya Hashimoto vs. Josh Dempsey:

In contrast to the formulaic, spotlight-hogging Hase, Hashimoto is a real man and a motherfucker of a worker. Hash/Corino in Tampa was a barrellfull of fun, watching it at the apron's edge as I was, able to feel the smacks of the blows as I put the mack on the ____ ; That Tampa match is relevant because the backstory here is the Hash/Corino feud, since Corino and CW Anderson second Hash. The psychology here is basic enough; Hash can't hang with Dempsey on strikes so he attempts to ground him with matwork. In this match, as in life, each party is successful when he can camouflage his weaknesses. Zbyszko may have been thinking of this match when he said a good rassler would beat a good striker every time, as yet another gaijin takes a fall.

Bill Goldberg vs. Rick Steiner

Goldberg gets out of a minivan and comes to the ring to his WCdub theme looking like Spanky's Big Bad Booty Daddy. Doesn't this stiff even warm up before the match? Steiner of course has Bite Me! on his ass. Anything to get you to deliver that high quality ring work, you worn out piece of crap. These two waltz for a while and do some power-plant level offense. Biggest bump Steiner took was hugging Chono, guest commentator, before the match. Goldberg took a backdrop. Goldberg/Mongo was better than this. Goldberg's theme starts at 1 on the final three-count. Pitiful display, and the worst match on the card; these two have no love for professional wrestling.

The Great Muta vs. Bob Sapp

Sapp is a pimp, a gangsta, a thug; everything Scott Steiner wishes he were. The new Superstar Graham, the greatest showman in professional sports. A Black Elvis, the amalgam of Mid-South JYD, Isaac Hayes, and John Shaft. If they feed Goldberg to Mr. Sapp, Mr. Sapp will have to beat him so bad that Bill's Nothing-Happenin', White Aryan Limp Bzzzzzzzzzzzzcut arm tattoos will look lilac in contrast to his bruised, mottled form. So much violence in the air, is this My Father's Great Muta? Or some imposter; oh well, don't mind, never matter, this match is all about Mr. Sapp. Mr. Sapp is going to save professional wrestling from itself. From Nagata/Chono Somnex Ironman Classics. From Necrophiliac Lesbian Angles. Here he is Black Moses, the first great professional wrestler who belongs to the 21st century. Sapp can put on a show, dancing his way into the ring to Madonna's Borderline. Sapp can deliver offense stiff as Vader's. Sapp can sell for a man he has 100 pounds of muscle on. This match was more or less a competitive squash, but one whose energy saved the show after the semi-main.

~!~

MICHINOKU PRO TV (8/11/02 taped 7/31/02)

(by DEAN RASMUSSEN)

This is the one the Tokoku Jr Title tournament. The belt itself is completely fabulous - what with the HR Gieger-inspired alienlike head where the Eagle would be and all. This also is drenched with the Dick Togo so imagine my delight. It starts off with beauty pageant sashes and everything. I am filled with charm for a foreign land where this use of fashion accessory would not lead to a match involving a man pretending to be gay and wearing a tiara.

Tomohiro Ishii vs. Ikeda-kun

Ikeda-kun has the Best Gimmick Of 2002: the wrestling puro fanboy stalker who only wrestles matches to get the autographs of his idols. It works on so many levels. The level I like is that he can actually wrestle after the gimmick forces him to beat the shit out of his idol. He is the Indie Scum equivalent of Mark David Chapman and you love that. Ishii will punch you right in the face and is a lot of fun being your basic shaved head prick that makes the indie world go round. Here, Ishii lays in a monstrous ass-beating early and Ikeda-Kun leans into it like a man. After fighting out of a Boston Crab, I-K gets on offense by fighting out of and countering a suplex and starts in with his own nice punches and fabulous Spinebuster. Ishii powerslams to TRANSITION~! and I-K eats a Lariat like Ray Stevens on methredrine and we have a little

match to be the first match of this- the little junior tournament. Ikeda-Kun will be good long after his gimmick gets annoying.

Tsubo Genjin vs. Chi-Nen Hokkai

I hate both these guys, but it IS a new 500 period and - yes - it is time. Time for new beginnings. Time for shitty wrestlers to erase the fecal spray they have blown all over my video screen and to prove to ME - your long-suffering writer - and YOU - the beloved and relished reader - that they have upped the ante, that they have RAMPED UP~!, that they buckled down on the fundamentals, to show that they NO LONGER SUCK DICK SO MUCH THAT I HATE THEM AS WRESTLERS. Let's watch shall we. Yes..... Chi-Nen Hokkai is still the pastiest man in all of wrestling. Tsubo is still a caveboy. HOLD THE MOTHERFUCKING PHONE. First they start just punching each other in the motherfucking face really really hard and with true urgency and hatred and THEN Hokkai hits this fucking GRISLEY corner dropkick and I AM SUDDENLY IN LOVE. Tsubo wins with a primitive submission and I am suddenly in love with this whole tournament, this whole tape, this whole promotion- this whole Michinoku Pro Five Years After The Fact.

Pentagon vs. Macho Pump

Macho Pump is..... problematic. Pentagon might be the same guy who died once. Who can be sure- HE WEARS A MASK! They take it to the mat and it varies between perfectly fine pro style and perfectly fine lucha matwork. They sell, apply various holds, kill time in an interesting way. They have a fun armdrag section that would have been better if both of these guys were faster and... you know... BETTER. Pump's tope is perfectly fine. Far better than his Rocker Dropper. His People's Elbow makes me want to drive over to Japan and smack Macho Pump in the head. They do some roll-ups and fuck up some stuff. Macho Pump is so the Nippon Mark The Shark Shrader and this was sooo the 4th best match on a Mid Eastern Wrestling Federation Junior Heavyweight Tourney 1997. When you get this tape, you will want to fast forward past this match of no substance at all.

Yuki Ishikawa/ GOEMON vs. Jinsei Shinzaki/ Hideki Nishida

Nishida is Japanese Indie Scum Jesus and YOU LOVE HIM. UNLESS YOU ARE SOME KIND FREAK OR WEIRDO. Shinzaki is in a down period where he becomes the most boring wrestler in Japan for a few years. Yuki Ishikawa has become REBORN with his stint in Zero-One and the Bat-Bat Restart and I'm a-thinking GOEMON is Koji Nakagawa or something. Nishida tries to go all Luchafantastic on GOEMON but GOE isn't up to the rudo challenge and I'm starting to realize who I hate in this match. Yuki leans into the tired and ponderous offense of Shinzaki and you wait for the two loads of the match to tag out so the guys you paid to see can go at - and finally Nishida and Ishikawa lock up its as fun as Lucha Crashing Into Shootstyle can be. Nishida sells his ankle getting ripped off at the stump and then Ishikawa takes the pro style turn with the Indian Deathlock and they begin working on Nishida's knee. Nishida is cool because he sells the pro style all pro style and sells the kneebar like it is Pride 11. He makes the tag and the match grinds to a Shinzaki-drenched halt. Nishida tries to get some semblance of wrestling out of GOEMON and then takes a minor ass-beating from Ishikawa before finally succumbing to a triangle hold. I await the white hot version of this match- Ishikawa vs Nishida. Not this. Nope.

Kazuya Yuasa vs. Ikuto Hidaka

Hidaka is all neato in this - what with his highflying mixed with his shootstyle - and Yuasa doesn't get smoked- what with his nice elbow drop and ability to beat one's ass in the ring. They take it to the floor and kick each other a bunch in a convincing manner and Hidaka works over Yuasa's leg- spindling his knee while smacking him in the face, a dickish move that will always get big points with a true wrestling fan. Hidaka takes his US trips to heart by cheating on the Figure Four by getting leverage from the ropes while Tommy the ref is distracted by ishii. Yuasa actually makes the Steamboat eyebrow sell as he hits the rope for the break. They exchange fantabulously stiff forearms until Hidaka CRUSHES Yuasa's groin with a Dave Jennings level Punt of Immense Pain and you party and freak out. They fight for control on the top turnbuckle and Yuasa wins with a Superplex for two. Hidaka fights back to offense with big elbows but suffers the giant lariat of the lanky Japanese Texan who follows it up with 1/4 Mach Man-lefvel toprope elbow. Then it goes all suplexy and hurty and Yuasa is bringing the stiff like a motherfucker. Hidaka gets on offense by INVERTING a Swinging DDT into Rear Naked Choke over the toprope and then following it up with a jumping DDT. He then hits the superswank German Suplex Into A Kneebar and one would think that Yuasa would tap.... BUT HIS FIGHTING SPIRIT gets him to the ropes and hidaka makes him pay by hitting a FUCKING HIDEOUS Springboard Missile Dropkick directly on the kneecap. Yuasa sprawls around and hits a desperation lariat for two but he can barely walk and can't procure the Northern Lights. Hidaka hits a powerbomb and Somoan Drop for two. They both block a bunch of punches after Hidaka dickishly dropkicks the back of Yuasa's knee while Yuasa is trying to run the ropes. Hidaka hits La Majistral and Yuasa counters it into a roll-up for the upset pin. That's good little match. It was as stiff as you want to be and you forget how much fun Hidaka is until he actually whips out the freaky offense.

Dick Togo vs. Masao Orihara

Orihara is like Jeff Jarrett - can competently wrestle and seems to be ahead of the pack in execution and slickness, but you gotta think back 10 years for a match that was worth a fuck that involved either of them. For Jarrett, you have the Micheals ladder match and the match with the late great Billy Joe Travis. For Orihara, you gotta go back to his match with Yuji Yasaraoka unencumbered by the Lance Storm Tag Partner Albatross and his tag matches in WAR with fucking Ultimo motherfucking Dragon against Lyger and El Samurai. Here, he is in with a white hot Dick Togo who has been the best rudo on earth for a year now - kicking you in the teeth, punching you in the face, making your shitty looking hurricanrana look like it would hurt someone, making your sorry ass look like you don't suck. Dick tries to hold up his end by punching Orihara in the face and ripping his knee to shreds but Orihara somehow makes this a dreary and ordinary affair as his Jarrettiness kicks in and he goes back to all of his rote spots that you got tired of back when he was the lesser of the Tonpachi Machine Guns. Actually, Orihara is kinda like a poor man's Shinzaki with cooler tattoos- in that you know what you are getting and you get it over and over and it can be fun when either are truly fired up. And both are unwatchable if going through the motions. This is Orihara not fired up, but not going through the motions- but more of a baffled Orihara. WAIT! NO NO NO, Orihara is like The Best Possible Rob Van Dam. His matches aren't any good but it takes you a while to figure out why. With RVD

it's because he sells like he just got finished putting his buddy Damon through a burning table off the trampoline while his dad videotaped it. With Orihara, it's a little trickier- what it IS is that Orihara sacrifices matches to make sure that he includes all of his crappy heel spots. If he had a good punch and didn't look so fucking sub-indie "Ice Cold" Shane SUWA Justice in his approximations of a SUWA-styled heel ass-beating maybe he would be easier to take. No, ACTUALLY Orihara is like Ethanol. No WAIT, Orihara is like Michelob Winter Double Bock. He's trying to pass himself off as some kind of ass-beater, but deep down he knows that he is just a run-of-the-mill Cruiserweight. There you go. He does have really great hair and probably gets the best weed in Japan. So WAIT! He's the Japanese Rob Van Dam. No he's better than Rob Van Dam because his fuck ups are less obvious. Either way, Dick Togo is still your motherfucking daddy and even he can't save this piece of shit. HEY! Orihara is ROB VAN DAM and Dick Togo is his Chris Benoit. You love the Togo parts but hate the match. There you go.

Metal Master vs. Great Sasuke

Everybody whines about Sasuke these days because it's all hip and shit but fuck all you, he rules and you suck- he will die for you and you now hate him for it? Suck MY dick too. Metal Master is Chad Malenko Collyer and God knows I want to be excited about him in his Japanese gimmick- though it does have the look of something that WCW would have come up with for Brad Armstrong in 1991 after Arachnaman didn't get over- as opposed to fun-filled racially questionable gimmicks MP usually comes up with. Either way, MM is all about the US Indie 1997 offense early on that I have come to really really really hate and he does all these strikes and suplexes that leave no ordinance but instead seem to just be stuff to kill time until they get to the middle section of the match, which saves it's bacon a little because it gets kinda matworky and goes into Sasuke killing himself to make you wake up- but actually fuck it, if it ain't 1/10 as cool as the last Usuda vs Ishikawa match from BattlARTS, I can't get worked up over fancy matwork unless it's a Southern-styles match and you know it's work to some kind of pinnacle of violence and hatred- just like the last Ishikawa vs Usuda match. This was too fucking clinical and not enough about ME wanting ONE of these GUYS to beat the FUCK out of the OTHER. Sasuke rocks it in this by landing directly on his head several times trying to not make Chad Collyer make me fall asleep. For that, I thank him and you should thank him.

~!~

Osaka Pro TV 06-20-02 (taped 05-26-02)

(by PHIL RIPPA)

Booty call, thy name is Osaka Pro. I always forget how much I enjoy this goofy fed until I sit down and watch the tapes. Treated so poorly, yet you always deliver with your sweet sweet nurturing bosom.

Takashi Tachibana vs. Yutaka Fukude

Tachibana has some hair that looks like mine – which means unfortunate. This is all about the stay on the mat shoot style that I love so much. Fukude is getting his neck worked over early and I will say that Tachibana needs to really wrench in the headlock otherwise he will quickly fall out of favor with me. Then they start beating the shit out of each other. God Damn – when did

Osaka Pro become the greatest fed ever? Oh yeah – Tachibana really needs to work on the application of his headlocks. I love how Osaka has all their shooters wearing neon. They are the deadliest Washington Blade readers ever. AWESOME! Okay Tachibana rules just for doing the jamming his elbow into the ribs while applying the abdominal stretch. Fukude is getting all the scrawny guy hope offense in this – with the quick counter kicks and the “I have no bicep clothesline”. Man – Tachibana isn’t afraid to do the greatest dropkick into the corner ever. Things aren’t looking good for young Fukude. Aww... poor little fella had to tap. Well, that was a good way to start the tape off.

Kengo Takai/Tiger’s Mask vs. Billy Ken Kid/Shu

Dean – in a drunken stupor awhile back – tried to expound on the virtues of Tiger’s Mask. I wasn’t buying it. Hahahahaha. Kengo Takai is trying to do everything to be the ultimate Dean stereotype wrestler – lumpy heavyweight with tassels. If his name were Shane, we would all be in trouble. Someone is going to have to tell me what Billy Ken Kid’s entrance music is as it just sounds like a Journey cover band to me. Maybe it was a Steve Perry solo project. Well know.... Let the revisionist history begin NOW. This is so much fun and Tiger’s Mask is so bringing the wrestling. Shu has the red hair and the Handsome Stranger entrance and questionable work ethic but he ain’t wrestling anymore so no matter. The more you watch this match, the more you realize how Takai is so Dean’s ultimate wrestler. When I eventually send him these tapes, he will be carrying on about how a Preston Quinn/Kengo Takai match would make him change his shorts. I am probably alone on an island but I really dig Billy Ken Kid and I am convinced that he is someone I actually really hate under a mask. Que sera sera He is still the best looking in the match including taking a narly looking German from Tiger’s Mask as it looked like the first time he was delivering that move. I would also point out that Billy is doing the F5. Japan – where all WWE finishers are copied. The match is a very spirited affair but carries on for two long for these four. Tiger’s Mask gets the win over Shu with a neato counter rollup out of a La Magistral and the crowd goes nuts for it. That was really kinda cool. Aww.... the ladies love Tiger’s Mask.

Azteca/Ebessan vs. Kuisinbo Kamen/Tortuger

That’s right. Nothing says 500 time, than a Tortuger match. This is all about the comedy and the being amazingly long. Part of that stems from three of the four guys wander around shaking down the entire crowd before getting in the ring. (Poor Tortuger got no love from the crowd.) As, I said, lots and lots of comedy. Can’t really complain, as the kids love the comedic stylings of the clown, the guy with the big ears, the turtle and the.... Mayan Warrior??? I really do love Azteca and I meant to review all that Azteca in New Japan but the tape is lost somewhere. Maybe in six years when #140 comes out. The fun moments involve Tortuger as everyone does the absurd sell of Tortuger actually having a shell on his back. It’s like a funny version of the Shark Boy biting thing. Tortuger is a fucking man for taking the most hurty comedy bumps ever. First he gets super air on the “Crotch yourself on the top rope” bump. Then he torches his shoulder on the “I am too old to complete this Asai Moonsault” spot. Part of the reason I also love this fed is that even in a comedy match, they still treat Kuisinbo Kamen’s out of control Sky Twister Press as death so when he hits it, Ebessan freaks out trying to save his poor little squashed partner. He manages to get there too which of course means that our beloved Tortuger has to do the job. Stupid bipeds keeping the reptiles down.

Gamma/Tsubasa/Black Buffalo vs. Takehiro Murahama/Miracle Man/Oriental

I should really love this match but I can't get over my growing hatred of Gamma. Lazy, sloppy, crippling fool. This is a match better 6-man match for Murahama than the one where he beats up the comedy workers on the other tape that I got from Highspots. It's also not Murahama vs. Naruse but its fine. Oriental is starting to pudge out and looks to be losing a step. You would much rather watch him than a bunch of other guys though. The match picks up once you get past the long opening part where Gamma is on offense and you stop drifting off to sleep wondering if when you awake he will have torn his ACL or ended someone else's career. I do appreciate any match where I dig all the masks – the Tsubasa heel mask is especially balls out. God, nothing beats guys who hang around Murahama so long they bring the pain like him too, which Miracle Man does (including one of the best inziguris around). Again – probably a worker I actually hate under the hood but I am keeping my rose colored glasses on. This turns into a spotfest – enjoyable but nothing great. Gamma disappears, no one complains. There is a cool looking spot where Miracle Man does a tope con hilo through the middle ropes while Oriental does a plancha off the top turnbuckle over him. It is entertaining that the comedy match before this was three minutes longer than this.

Super Delfin/Super Demekin vs. Daio QUALLT/Big Boss MA-G-MA (Osaka Pro Tag Festival Finals)

QUALLT and MA-G-MA are the best Harris Brothers ever. No wait, that not right. Even if they were both crippled, they would still be better than the Harris Brothers. They are the best Faces of Fear ever as they are that monster heavyweight tag team that has a good look and one member is really good and the other member isn't the worst wrestler in the world. (MA-G-MA is the former, QUALLT the later and QUALLT is actually wrestling like Kane when Kane is permanently on that two week decent streak each year.) They get a really great entrance here as the smoke machine goes off full blast and the two just pose in the hazy cloud. Super Delfin is Super Delfin and he has been wrestling the same fucking match since 1993 and it is getting really tiresome. The real person to talk about it Super Demekin. In terms of time period injuries, I think the only person I was more disappointed was injured than Demekin was Takayama. Demekin has become so motherfucking great to watch. The best part is that there is a vast array of things to love. Like during the crowd brawling portion of the match Demekin does his ode to lucha by taking the "I am going to plant my knee on the top turnbuckle and launch myself to my death" bump ONLY Demekin does it on the usually mundane throw into the row of chairs. It was outstanding as Demekin plants on the first chair and ends up six rows deep. Another reason for my love is that he does the Shining Wizard that Muto dreams of doing. I also love that Demekin has become great at selling and he takes an absolute brutal beating – the most cringe inducing spot is where he takes a sitout tombstone from MA-G-MA that I had to rewatch a few billion times. Shit – I have fallen in love with MA-G-MA too. He is the poor man's Super Boy and there is zero wrong with that comparison.

The structure of the match is the crowd brawl first, then the monster heels beat on the crowd favorites. In the switches into the DVDVR favorite portion of the match – the head dropping section (Hey. We don't care about the health of the wrestlers.) The last portion of the match is

the worst – at least for me. As it is Super Delfin booking himself to be God as he kicks out of every finisher imaginable. This dilutes the babyface upset win as with that many failed chances from the heels the crowd comes to either expect a “well, we knew he (the babyface) had to win because two of them (the heels) couldn’t beat him” or a “oh look at that, two big guys squashed a little fellow”. It is also annoying because while Delfin can constantly survive the two on one onslaught, Demekin needs to win the match after the goofy heel miscommunication spot. Sigh... I do need to find me tape of a Demekin/MA-G-MA singles match.

I really need to start dedicating myself back into Osaka Pro as TAKA has showed back up and they seem to be setting up some promotional stuff with DDT. Of course, more Osaka Pro means less time to watch the Wildside. What am I ever to do?

~!~

TORYUMON 8/16/02
(by DEAN RASMUSSEN)

So CRAZYMAX is the Four Horsemen now and that rules- what with SUWA assuming the role of 1989 Barry Windham and all of them having the belts. Evil Magnum and Evil Genki and the dance routines and the Mochizuki Baseball stable and everything. Ahhh TORYUMON, you fucking rule it...

Stoker Ichikawa vs Tarucito:

It's a laffRIOT! Remind me to rewatch it and review the living hell out of it later.

SUWA vs. Kennichiro Arai:

Both of these guys wrestle as hard as nails so imagine my delight to see them beating the life out of each other here. SUWA as a face is weird but he is so fucking good that he pulls it off as well as he did wrestling heel. JESUS CHRIST! SUWA is a fucking wrestling MESSIAH. The hard as fuck DiBiase offense- including the fucking Regal Cravate and the COMPLETELY balls out straight punch to the face and Full DiBiase Bodyweight Fistdrop-NUMBER ONE AND THE BEST. IF YOU DON'T LIKE SUWA, YOU DON'T LIKE PRO WRESTLING AND YOU can SUCK DICK. Arai eats WADS of offense and finally counters a Pedigree before being cut off by being hiptossed onto the rampway. They brawl on the ramp and Arai uses his hard skull to go on offense finally as they take it to the streets. SUWA cuts him off when Arai tries to get in the ring and Arai uses his rockhard skull to counter a top lariat. SUWA is soooo fucking MidSouth with the Reverse Atomic Drop as a counter. Arai uses a diving headbutt to set up his toprope Teethbreaker and we all weep at the glory. Arai misses the diving headbutt and hits the Gigantic Dropkick to set up the Pedigree for the win. SUWA fucking rules.

Magum Tokyo/ Genki Horiguchi/ Darkness Dragon vs. Masaki Mochizuki/ Dragon Kid/ Ryo Saito vs. CIMA/ Don Fuji/ Yoshikazu Taru:

T2P sits at ringside and talks shit to CRAZY MAX. It starts out as a melee and it's fun. Early on, it is a battle to see who hates Ryo Saito the most- Genki or Don Fuji, then Don Fuji decides

that he hates both of them equally and they are all as much of a dick to each other as much as humanly possible. Genki does the most athletically fabulous dickiness of the segment with the misdirected missile dropkick to Don Fuji's head. TARU, Dragon Kid and Darkness Dragon have a similar segment where Darkness Dragon decides to dick everyone over in the Camel Clutch dropkick spot. Magnum and Masaaki really hate each other but Don Fuji decides to come in and be everybody's whipping boy and then it gets kinda goofy as CIMA agrees to be chopped by everybody and goes screaming out of the ring. CRAZY MAX Ritual Hazing continues as Don Fuji asks for another. Saito and Magnum decide to have a regular wrestling match again and Don Fuji tags in to Giantly Swing Saito into the dropkick of Darkness. Then they do the annoying circle of head scissors before Magnum breaks it up. They all turn on Magnum for screwing up the ECW 3-way Dance Comedy Spot and take turns avalanching him in the corner. Then they do more lucha comedy hi-jinx before setting up the awesomely goofy Rugby Scrum Four Man Suplex. Evil Magnum kicks CIMA in the groin and then waves his dick at Dragon Kid's face before Rana-ing him off the top. CRAZY MAX and M2K decide to take it to the streets and they spill into T2P's seats and T2P says, "Awwwww, fuck this!" and complete chaos of kicking and punching and hurting ensues. TORYUMON is zany! Wads of powder, jumping and misdirection causes Darkness Dragon to pin TARU. Magnum and Masaaki go at it like motherfuckers and sets up DK getting the two before getting unmasked by DD. Things happen. Dragon Kid is set and he SPRINGS into his Spin Around The Body Octopus Hold Variation BUT Darkness Dragon cinches up on the leg and counters into a Swastika Submission Variation and you lose your fucking mind at the Lucha Submission goodness. That there is some wrestling. Post-match, everybody talks shit then UD comes down and makes everyone feel guilty.

~!~ SINGLES GOING STEADY ~!~

VERNE GAGNE vs. HANS SCHMIDT

(by ANTHONY GANCARSKI)

I'm not sure of the date on this, but my best guess is late '50s Chicago. Starts off with a lot of kick/punch, then settles into some actual wrestling. Those of you who remember Gagne mostly in the context of 1980s AWA tapes and wondered what kind of worker he was would be pleased to see the smart match he works here with the brawling Schmidt. Simple wrestling where there is wrestling, and if you look closely you'll see how Verne may have taught Flair a thing or two about carrying a bigger opponent. My favorite thing in this entire match is Verne working the knee, grinding it for everything it's worth. That's wrestling.

HARLEY RACE vs TED OATES

(by ANTHONY GANCARSKI)

The stakes are considerable in this JIP 2 out of 3 fall match; Race's coveted Central States title and, if Oates can put Race out of wrestling, a \$25,000 bounty. Outside of WrestlingClassics.com, you don't hear too much about the Oates legacy, and that's a shame. They work a tight, realistic style in general, and Oates and Race here both work the same methodical, calculating match. The punches are tight and realistic, and this reminded me of Flair/Race arena matches from around the time of Starrcade 1983. A lot of outside the ring stuff, with Babyface Harley attempting to piledrive the heel Oates outside the ring; the backdrop

reversal gets booed. KC, the real vampire fans, who when informed that Willie Wilson had a coke problem, took up a collection to hook him up with a kilo. That last bit may be apocryphal.

HARLEY RACE vs. JERRY STUBBS

(by ANTHONY GANCARSKI)

A WRAL studio match, the announcing here informing me that Stubbs is a "young lion" and that his favorite move is the Figure-Four leglock. With long, stringy hair here, Stubbs looks like the lost brother of Charlie Fulton or Rene Goulet. This runs about 7 minutes, with Race throwing a few suplexes and scoring a couple of two counts, just beating Stubbs down. Not a disappointing match at all, even if it is just a showcase for Race.

LOU THESZ vs. JOSE TANQUERO

(by ANTHONY GANCARSKI)

A TV studio match from sometime after Castro became a despised figure in US mythology, as Jose is referred to as a "Cuban -- a bad man" by the announcer. A squash match from a time when innocence was in the air and when all cars had fins, this features a lot of chain wrestling, no-selling from Thesz, and little tricks pulled by Thesz that made rope breaks less clean than they could've been. Thesz exuded subtlety and those little tricks that made matches look competitive turned even squashes into events with depth and pride in craftsmanship.

LOU THESZ vs. ARGENTINE ROCCA

(by ANTHONY GANCARSKI)

Speaking of old-school carry jobs... This match is very odd. It started off with a surprisingly slow "feeling out" period, and then went into a couple of nice counterwrestling sequences and the standard Thesz tricks -- the short strikes and such -- until Thesz scored the first fall. The second fall was controlled by Rocca, featuring a ten minute side headlock. Five minutes of it standing, five minutes on the mat. During the standing portion of the move, it seemed as if Rocca was a bit short of breath. It also seemed that Thesz tended to like a bit more action in his matches, but I figured they were trying to go Broadway and were "building". But Rocca more or less slumped into the headlock on the mat, and it became quite apparent that Rocca was draped slack over the prone body of Thesz. In an attempt to save things, Thesz started rolling Rocca back and forth, for a series of two counts, but the crowd wasn't buying it. Thesz managed to carry Rocca to a fall; a contrived mess after which Thesz faked being blown up for some minutes on the mat. The third fall was not shown, which is quite curious to me, as I finished watching the match thinking Rocca had blown up to the point of having a mild heart attack. Rocca's eyes were glazed like a zombie from an Italian horror movie, and Thesz somehow managed to make him look like he was actively wrestling. Perhaps the best carry job of a catatonic except when Flair carried the Modern Day Warrior to ***1/2 during a Texas-sized overdose.

EDDY GUERRERO vs. DOUG WILLIAMS:

(by ANTHONY GANCARSKI)

Back when I was heavily into putting the old-school over at the expense of anything currently happening, I would find myself trying to explain how much weight I put on the nuances of wrestling. Spots are wonderful things, but there is a lot to be said for the effective use of elbows,

for holds that look leveraged, and so on. That mindset about wrestling was reflected in DVD500 numbers for people like Regal and Guerrero who often weren't/aren't put in positions to have "great" matches. The argument went from some quarters that the lack of "great" matches meant that certain workers had lost their skills. I'm not going to say that this match, a semifinal from the recent King of England tourney, was a great match. It had its moments; some really nice chain wrestling and the precision of Eddy's offense in general. But what stood out for me above that was how well Eddy compensated for the occasional lapses Williams had in execution. Eddy would literally take miscommunication and make it look like part of the match, and the end result was an old-school carry job in a new school match. I don't know if Doug Williams is anywhere close to be #16 in the world based on this particular match.

DOUG WILLIAMS vs. JODIE FLEISCH
(by ANTHONY GANCARSKI)

Or this one. I thought about a lot of things during this match, which isn't a good thing. I started copyediting, twisting my hair, thinking about the use of mirror spots in 2002. I guess I expected more than a dressed-up Chris Stevens vs. Sonny Siaki. Sell the arm, sell the arm. Fleisch can bump with the best of them, but his penchant for unnecessary bumps dilutes the whole match and will shorten his career. I think both guys need to seem less like they're faking having a wrestling match, as well. There was sham intensity in this, the result of two workers with weak characters who apparently don't understand how Bruiser Brody made a living, or how Mid-Atlantic was built around the breathtaking stoicism of Johnny Valentine.

YOUR MOST DRAWN OUT REVIEW EVER
THE EAGLE PRO CRUISERWEIGHT TOURNAMENT (7/23/2000 - QuarterFinal)
GENTARO (WYF) vs Heaven (Zipang)
(by DEAN RASMUSSEN)
A Conceptual Psychadelic/New Wave Mini Rock Opera.

Heaven gets behind the wheel of his 1981 Toyota Corona. It's a worn-out shade of green and the rain is coming in through the side of the windshield where it has rusted through. The radio lights up and only plays AM- one would think it were a throwback to the days before the loudness of your car stereo was as important as what kind of stations you could receive while parking, but here it is more of an indication of a indie wrestler down on his luck. He is alone and let's down his fierce facade- his face collapses into a visage of sadness and longing.
"GENTARO, I have loved you as a brother and as a man. I have loved you as much as a man can love another man without crossing over into a physical blending of spiritual love. But I have never loved anyone like...." Heaven is overly dramatic and astoundingly pretentious. He sings in a high weepy falsetto.

GRACE

(Buzzcocks speed with an XTC-channelling-late-period-Beatles psychedelic melody)

Ni-Tsan painted you-

crosshatched and mist rising to the sun=your eyes-
The thought of your flesh and you kissing me is a whirlwind,
swirling cherry creme, and me dizzy and falling.
Tender priceless kisses in my head,
your indifference in my real world,
A god that hates me-
and you don't care.
Now, I will cry my bitter tears...

(optional 14 minute sitar solo)

GENTARO gets to the Communtiy Center where the sparse crowd has begun to trickle in.
GENTARO is a whorehound and will sleep with absolutely anything. He was the only wrestler
to sleep with a certain dead promoter's wife and not realize that he was supposed to get a
contract out of it. Eagle Soldier greets him at the door.

OH I'M IN LOVE!

(Think Broadway)

ES: Ooooooooooh, Gentarooooooooo- there's a story going round- the hottest story in
this town- all about howwwwwwww....

GT: ... how I'm in love?

ES: How you're in love! How you're in love wiiiiiiith....

GT: How I'm in love with a giirl, a beautiful girl!

CHORUS:

Ooooooh she is like a graceful moonsault (stylin', profilin')

Oh to kiss her lips divine

OHHHHH it hit me like a DiBiase Fistdrop! (stylin', profilin')

OOOOOOOOOOOOOH I'd say SHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEe's fine as summertime wine!!

ES: Oh she's ever so beautiful for sure- but there's one thing I must know...

GT: Yes Eagle Soldier, what do yooooou want to know about this girl...

ES: We've been out together, out paintin' the town, we got there when it opened
and thrown out when they close it all down-

We've been to the Wild Child and the Asian Beaver Revue-

GT: We've chased a mighty batch of skirt and lost many \$1's that's true....

ES: So let me ask and please do tell me trooooooooo..... You've loved many
ladies, painted and obscene-

in nightclub bathroom stalls, in the alley behind the 1-hour Dryclean,
if this is who I think it is- are you sure?

You could be in love with one so pure?

GT: Ohhhh, Dear Eagle, though I am a rounder and a cad,
smoking weed with criminals and being Jack the Lad,
I can assure you when it comes to this maiden fair
she can only receive my purest love of my soul laid bare!
Other motherfuckers may try to ply her with their stinky love,
but MINE is ordained and heaven-sent from above!

CHORUS

ES: Oh dear Gentaro I want to believe, but didn't you say the same about half
the women you mounted last week?

GT: Oh last weeks cannot compare, I fell for their pretty faces- the smell of
their hair!

With this, my tender perfect flower- all the others are but hideous toads to me,
A horrible memory, warts and pencillin and burning when I pee.

This will be different for I LOVE HER with all I GOT!

It'll be forever, forever lovin'! Forever HOT!

ES: Thank you, GENTARO!

I must warn you.

Heed my words, I must waaaaaaaarn you!

there is another who wished for her hand other than you-

One who is far more pure than you, far far more sincere than yoooooooooooo.

And he will be across the ring from yoooooooooooo

GT: Nooooo, this cannot be!

Not Heaven- a true friend to me!

No, say it isn't so that I must crush a friend whom I have loved sooooooooo

NOOOOOO, say it isn't SOOOOOOOO! Oooooooooh-NOOOOOOOOOO!

though he is a brother to me, I must crimp his spine.

I must bust his nose into gela-tine!

I will with a heavy heart, rip his spinal chord apart.

Of our friendship I now care not!

I will beat him here in Tokyo, in Osaka or in the parking lot!

CHORUS with EVERYONE IN THE TOURNAMENT:

Ooooooh she is like a graceful moonsault (stylin', profilin')

Oh to kiss her lips divine

OHHHHH it hit me like a DiBiase Fistdrop! (stylin', profilin')

OOOOOOOOOOOOOH I'd say SHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEe's fine as summertime wine

[Big sliding finish- Jazzhands- andddd..... FREEZE and wait for applause.]

Grace feeds her cat and thinks about her reffing duties. She is usually content with her lot in life
but lately she has felt lonely and unfulfilled- her job as a referee alienates her from not only

mainstream Japanese society but also the Japanese indie wrestling community. It is all starting to drive her batty. "They MUST NOT BE ABLE TO CHEAT! It is my mission as a woman and as a ref to bring JUSTICE to that god-forsaken Community Center. That motherfucker heaven will do what he can to get a pin over that dirtbag GENTARO. How I hate them BOTH!"

DOUBLE REPULSION

(sort of a Shop Assistants speedy pop number with the big sped up Phil Spectre beat)

One is a freak
wearing a mask
I wanna puke
thinking of his pasty sweaty touch

I know he's got
a stalker shrine
in his house
and I'm the star

I would never kiss him, I would never touch him, oooooo-ooooo my skin is
crawling at the thought of him
I would rather punch him in the mouth and kick him in the teeth

And the other one
he's total scum
would sleep with Ryama Go
if you shaved him right

dirtbag romeo
king of the grime
suave as a salted slug
I'd rather die
Than give him the time

I would never kiss him, I would never touch him, oooooo-ooooo my skin is
crawling at the thought of him
I would rather punch him in the mouth and kick him in the teeth

Why can't they be
the one I wanna see
from SPWC
Survival Toby

[Grace is filled with longing and weeps gently....]

GENTARO and Heaven face off in the ring. Heaven can tell by looking into GENTARO's eyes that their friendship has been severed by the love of a woman.

GENTARO I LOVE YOU NO MORE

[reverb drenched dirge mixed wrong with a lot of cowbell like on SISTER LOVERS]

innocence
your innocence is no match
for the weakness in me
my flesh commands my mind
a love too big
for one man to contain
I revile you
as I love her
I destroy my love
for you
so that her love may live
you possessed by her smile
I am possessed by her smile
a suplex to prove my love
a piledriver to prove my love
your blood to prove my love
your pain to prove my love
my shoulder
separated for her
my collarbone
broken for her
I land as my heart lands
grotesque
wrong
shoulder-first

GENTARO stares back at Heaven. He is filled with rage and love- as these feelings in his heart battle each other.

WHY HEAVEN WHY

[kinda like a 70s Rock song- think "Radar Love" or "Cold Gin". But not too much. DO overannunciate like Paul Stanley. It drifts into a Dolemite thing.]

Who was there when Shark Tsuchiya found you in the walk-in with Miwa Sato?

Who kept her bay when she was gonna cutcha with her blade, oh?
WHO took tha hit and gave Shark the love she needs?
I loved her till mah fo-ah head bleeds!
A crazy motherfucker named GEN to the TARO
love a girlie yesterday and she'd come till tomorrow

CHORUS

Fuck you Heaven
You turned on me
Your mask looks like shit too
What the fuck is that supposed to be?

Her name was Julie
And you were gonna try git her back to the crib
You said, "Julie, hot mama, lemme show you my grindin' poppin' bustin' MO-tion-
I got the lovin' and the Cold Duck- you gotta let me on in!"
I saw past the mascara and negligee and silver metal pants-
I said, "I ain't one to cockblock a brother, no matter his scene-
but you may wanna take a look down at what Poison Sawada Julie is packing in
those Silver Jeans."
You took a look and bugged out at the full cod staring ya in the mug

CHORUS

You hooked me up more than once and it made us strong
like us fighting the bulldagger crew of Aja Kong
when you played the fool and hit on that
I was there when she had you splayed and fileted
your junk was waving in the breeze and her gloves were on the floor
Gonna urican your jimmy all the way to Baltimore.
So I flip into a ker-razy karate stance and Aja's mouth is agape
Hit her with the ninja stars I hide under my cape
Now we let a skinny ref tear us apart
You gotta think with your dick and not with your heart

CHORUS

2 BE CONTINUED.
~THE DEATH VALLEY PLAYAZ ~
OCCASIONALLY 8 FISTS IN THE FACE OF WRESTLING